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Institutionalizing Information Access on ASEAN's Folklore: *The Orang Laut*

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Abstract

The blueprint of ASEAN becomes the foundation for symbolic interaction when one accesses related information. Information access is a repeatedly tracing pattern, by a group, on the availability of information. In the context of ASEAN Socio-cultural Community, ethnic group identities can be used as a mediator to deliver and disseminate folklore icons, at any time of face-to-face rituals activities (interaction), both formally and informally.

Pattern on information access is in the mind and belief of ASEAN people, which also becomes references for their living. Continuous institutionalizing process to the daily life of ASEAN people will strengthen the sense and conviction of information access as an institution, because it will raise the awareness of the we-feeling of ASEAN.

Folklore on Indonesia's *Orang Laut* (literally, sea people), especially the permanent sea-living Bajo Tribe, shows resemblance on its origin and accordingly can be referred to be the ASEAN Community 2015, both economically and politically. The question is how to provide sources and access of information, whether its format, channel, and location, and how such access could be institutionalized, so that the ASEAN blueprint 2015 will come into existence.

Keywords: Information access, 'Orang Laut', Bajo Tribes; Folklore

1.Introduction

In order to improve human resources of ASEAN, it is possible to provide information access through library, information center, and archive institution. Information access as a life-long learning can be achieved if such institution can provide references to meet the need user community¹. Available references can be used to produce another source of knowledge, such as scientific works, books, and the like. Folklore is of no exception. Folklore is defined as collective culture, which is spread and passed on to generations, in any collective means and traditional versions, and not only appeared as oral tradition but also gestures and mnemonic devices. (Danandjaja, 1993:p,2).

Information access is important because it bridges particular indigenous norms and value in one hand with ASEAN community in the other hand. Therefore, institutionalizing information access is an activity to build the sense of togetherness within the framework of ASEAN community. Such access is also important due to its function as folklore's promotion and preservation tools to all its user, e.g. the ASEAN people

¹ *User community* is group of people using the information. Mostly these people involve in research and development activities. These people also conduct more practical activities.

All user need and take benefits from various sources and form of information, so that among them there is always information author or producer. Such user will write down his/ her research into a report.

An author's work will have no impact if it is not published, augmented, or disseminated into a formal channel.

themselves.

Specifically in Indonesia, structural gap on information access can be seen on the case of *Orang Laut*. While Indonesia is a maritime country, it has no concrete concerns on the tribe matters. If the country built such sound access, the *Orang Laut* community would preserve its culture through folklore accessible by their own, Indonesian society, and more broadly, the ASEAN people.

Awareness as part of ASEAN community could be intensified and spread over to each individuals through the *Orang Laut*'s sense of pride. It can be achieved if there are any information access containing the sacred *Orang Laut* folklore. It will also be much better if it could be accessed by everyone regardless their places, religion, and politics. Were it the case, the information access would enhance the unity and we-feeling of ASEAN based on equality among tribes and ethnic groups.

Related to policy issue, some states suggest to build an institutionalized ASEAN information access network. Those countries conduct regular information transfer which is then transformed into the agreement on the Freedom of Public Information in ASEAN. This continuous activities will gradually transform information access institution into a single community so that the information within can be spread out and accessed in effective and efficient way. In the other hand, although ASEAN already has librarian institution¹, e.g CONSAL (Congress of Southeast Librarians), SEA Librarian weblink, and SEA Log, it has nothing to deal with archive matters²) and does not relate to the issue of ethnic group equality.

The research discusses the issue of information access which is institutionalized in the form of transfer and tracing of folklore' information, certification, and government regulation on formal recognition, equal rights, creativity, and self-development. Repeatedly information access activities will produce not only information-tracing pattern but also values and awareness as a member of ASEAN, through inherited and historically popular, yet not verifiable, folklore.

Why information access on ASEAN's *Orang Laut* folklore need to be institutionalized? What make information access significant to the meaning of ASEAN's *Orang Laut* folklore? How do information access on *Orang Laut* help strengthening and improving the ASEAN Community awareness?

The research tries to build awareness on the need of information access to ASEAN's *Orang Laut* folklore so that it triggers more awareness on ASEAN people's identity as a single community. Institutionalizing such access will suppress differences and alienation based on ones ethnic groups or tribes; therefore it will nurture solidarity within ASEAN people.

2. Information Access in ASEAN

Information access institutionalization has been introduced formally as norms or regulations with specific sanctions in any written records, such as the Constitution or Law, and informally through custom law and habits with social or moral sanction (i.e. being alienated). Usually all those institution are binding and relatively long-lasting.

Scopes for information access are information access in family (informal), in school (formal), and in society (nonformal). Thus, information access can perform its function from creation and evaluation to preservation. These function are also followed by implicit function, such as to delay information updating process, to become channel for social mobility, and to maintain integration within society.

Information access as an ability to find specific information regards no format, channel, or location. Its function is to help user to afford his/ her living, to enhance one's perception of life, and to develop intelligences through reading. Information access can be found in information center, library (or the like with different naming) and secondary service center. All this information center has important function to present and disseminate information by conducting procurement, analysis, recording, and servicing. Library gathers all mankind works and becomes the collection of written information accessible to everyone who needs it. Its organizational and supervisory activities include classification, catalogue making, subject indexing, and abstracting. This activity also produces search engine so that user can access information in effective and efficient way (Taylor, 2002).

Institutionalization process on ASEAN's information access involves individuals, groups, community, organization, and society. All parties involved work harmoniously with the support of ASEAN member states' government to build information access network. Some states initiatively become the pioneer to conduct information transfer which is then formalized into joint agreement on Freedom of Public Information in ASEAN.

Common values among member states have enabled them to create regularized community of information access consisting of individuals and ASEAN state's government so that they care and preserve the socio-cultural, political, and liberal economic information more. Information access has become ASEAN's common ritual to maintain solidarity based on the ASEAN's common identity.

Knowledge is references for individuals and society in a community in order to prepare them for further social inclusion, in which previously they assume others as outsider. This activities, which in other words is an effort to identify others as themselves, can be achieved through their shared primordial ethnic groups. Knowledge can not be detached from ones ancestral traditional beliefs. In the other hand, it is a fact that there are many highly educated individuals still believing in folklore (symbol of irrationality) (Danandjaja, 1993).

Knowledge is a way for every individual belongs to be *orang laut* to gain and maintain the awareness of their cultural history. This kind of history can be understood easily through the folklore. Folklore can be the channel for ASEAN's individual to understand more on, in an open-hearted and open-minded way, their ancestral history. Besides, by taking advantages from technology-based information access, knowledge on the *orang laut* folklore can be gathered, analyzed, and disseminated in the framework of common *orang laut* bonding across ASEAN.

Folklore itself is a knowledge and a means to disseminate and sow the awareness of ones' ancestral origin of an ethnic group. In order to embed it, folklore need to be communicated as part of daily life and religious rituals. By making them interact and conduct rituals, every member of any given ethnic group will arrange, have, and use its symbols to grow community-based knowledges and beliefs. In the other way around, beliefs in the individual and societal strength within their sacred community will strengthen this network. The network brings forth the authority and power of any ethnic-based groups due to their blood ties. The power also disseminates knowledge about insider and outsider along with guidance to act and behave.

Nation-building through folklore is actually has been stated in the Development Planning Program (*Program Perencanaan Pembangunan* or PROPENAS) 2002-2004, Chapter X on development planning, subchapter on Program on Developing and Enhancing Information Access to Natural Resources and Living Environment (p.4-5). Information access institutionalization on *orang laut*'s folklore becomes a means and solution to avoid any greedy, power-thirsty, and disrespect behaviors by promoting the values of tolerance and *gotong royong* (mutual support).

3.Orang Laut Folklore in Digital Form

There are similarities between the myth of Bajo (according to the elder of Torsiaje) and Bugis-Makassar and Mandar (according to their folklore). The same also true to cultural beliefs of all those four *Orang Laut*. Their worldviews refer to the myth of *La Galigo* in which the world is divided into three structures: the upper world, the lower world, and the man-lived middle world.

1. Beliefs

In Bajous culture, there is a belief that spirits are also their ancestors. They believe that as long as they don't forget them, the ancestors will guard them forever. They also show it by putting out a white flag in the sea.

2. Folklore

The Bajou's folklore tell about the missing princess Bajou. The people were ordered to find the princess. Some fleets also dispatched around the world for the purpose. The princess was then found in Bone. The finders then settled in Bone and never returned. The story has been passed on generations

although some denies it.

3. The Verse

The village elders sing the verse below in Bahasa:

Saya kiralah burung merpati. (I thought it was airy bird)

Tidak kutahu burung merpati. (It was actually a peageon)

Sayalah kira rekeng saudara. (I thought you were siblings)

Tidak kutahu menaruh hati. (didn't know to accidentally fall in love)

4. Poem usually sung in the sea

Daya sebatang dibila kasantan.

Paboko kami ka sapa haluan

Kalau tangkil pasanan lakuku

Buih mateku alo haloan.

5. Bajous also express their culture in meaningful proverbs.

3.1 The approach

Interview will be conducted upon tribes of Bajo, Bugis, Mandar, and Makassar in Indonesia in order to understand how they experience their information access and folklore. Focus group discussion (FGD) will be also held to understand more on their perspectives. Further on, literature review on *orang laut* will be conducted on PDII Library, Language Development Center (the *Pusat Pembinaan Bahasa*), National Library, H.B. Yassin Library, and the National Archive.

3.2 Folklore in digital library website

There should be elaboration on several efforts that has been conducted to improve appreciation on cultural heritage and its management system, including its funding so that it can optimally function as means of education, recreation, and culture development... article (22) development support on regional culture; (23) development on national archeology; (24) preservation on the physic and content of codex; (25) recording and digitalization of literatures.

Digital library website on *orang laut*'s folklore could be used as channel and platform to tie ASEAN's individuals. Digital library relies on speed access because it uses digital data dan the internet. Digital data format does not only record printed materials or books but also multimedia such as audio recording and video. The internet has been used by the people of Bugis-Makassar (Mandar) with website: www.rappang.com. Digital library of the Bajous has been on the concern of four ASEAN members, so that its media could be reproduced and incorporated into the *rappang* website.

3.3 Institutionalizing Information Access on Orang Laut

Modern library is no longer a place to printed collection only but it has been improved to conduct information management, such as tracing, repackaging, analysis, and evaluation. By focusing on information tracing, any digital library that accomodates the *orang laut*'s folklore could figure a reality-based imagination perceived as real experience by users.

Jean Baudrillard (1988:170) stated his critics on relations between signs as seen in the semiotic. He based his arguments on the fact that signs move to four steps: 1. reflection of reality; 2. covering and disguising those reality; 3. covering up the non-existence of reality; 4. containing the unrelatedness with reality: a moving image is the simulacrum itself.

This Baudliard's idea can be seen on the website and internet illustrating the folklore of the *orang laut*

(Bugis, Makassar, Mandar and Bajo). At first, the folklore is presented as an independent, free, and objective reality. Second, there has been signs of ideological construction on the folklore. It can be seen from the camouflage of the core issue and there are also some continuously emphasized aspects in order to serve the interest of ruling parties. Third, the folklore is presented into a recording activity with the existence of actor and behavior which both are arranged according to its time scale. Folklore could gain viewers through the internet technology. The reality-based folklore are now becoming unreal. The fourth step is critical for Baudliard. In presenting folklore, the website appearances replace the reality itself. The important actor now is the viewer, by choosing existing icons, images, and sounds. In this regards however, folklore can not be detached from its imagination.

Therefore, by using advanced information and communication technology that now can be accessed 24 hours online through the internet, imagination like the folklore can move across ASEAN and the world.

Multimedia revolution through the internet opens up the existence of hyper-reality. Imagination manipulates the production of image representation. As a multimedia application, the internet development as a huge electronic data storage and virtual technology, has made a great leap in the character of virtual culture.

4. Conclusion

ASEAN representatives make agreement on the existing folklore of *orang laut* in an internet format so that it can confirm the culture-bonding of ASEAN. Through the *orang laut* that spreads over ASEAN (the Bugis-Makassar-Mandar-Bajo), one can understand that although ASEAN people vary in much ways, they are one in nature. Such policy is a counter for the mainstream policy which always tends to be structural and support the mainstream culture.

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